

CIA Manual Producers Say They're 'Scapegoats'

Mid-Levels Officials Object to Punishment

By Robert Parry
Associated Press

Several CIA mid-level officials disciplined over the spy agency's production of a Nicaraguan rebel manual have objected to the punishments, contending that they are being made "scapegoats" to protect senior CIA officials, administration sources say.

One administration official, who insisted on anonymity, said several of the six punished CIA employees had refused to accept the discipline by balking at signing letters that are being placed in their personnel files.

The official said those objecting to the discipline claim that they had no role in approving the original manual, which counsels the CIA-backed rebels on "selective use of violence" to "neutralize" officials of Nicaragua's leftist government.

President Reagan on Saturday approved a recommendation by the CIA inspector general meting out discipline to a handful of mid-level agency officials, but sparing senior officials from any punishment. Reagan also insisted that the manual's contents did not violate a longstanding presidential executive order

barring U.S. involvement in assassinations.

Some congressional Democrats have criticized the findings and said oversight hearings, expected after Thanksgiving, would examine the role of CIA Director William J. Casey and other top officials.

Rep. Norman Y. Mineta (D-Calif.), a senior member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, said the White House statement on the CIA report "confirms my earlier suspicion that the report would be a whitewash. [It] apparently dumps the blame on middle-level people.

"What about the senior-level people who either knew about the manual or should have known about it?"

Although the White House has refused to provide details about the discipline, administration and congressional sources said this week that six CIA employees were punished, with three given letters of reprimand, two suspended without pay, and the author of the manual, identified by his pseudonym John Kirkpatrick, allowed to resign from his agency contract.

One administration official said those punished included the CIA station chief in Honduras, where most of the U.S.-backed rebels are

based, and officials involved in propaganda activities related to the Nicaraguan covert action.

The official said the disciplinary actions had raised concerns inside the CIA that a precedent was being set that when problems arise "responsibility will be given to the people in the trenches who are implementing legally given orders."

The official said the mid-level personnel believed that they were "being made scapegoats to protect" senior officials, including Casey, who has supervised the Nicaraguan covert action since Reagan authorized it in December 1981.

The official said that despite Reagan's assertion during the Oct. 21 presidential debate that the manual was reviewed by CIA personnel in Central America and in Washington, there never was an "official review process." He said that those being disciplined had only seen bound, printed copies of the book and that only one of them even partially reviewed it.

The official added that punishment had fallen disproportionately on CIA personnel associated with the Latin America Division, while the International Affairs Division, which is responsible for paramilitary activities worldwide, was largely spared from discipline.

The official said Kirkpatrick had been hired by International Affairs as an expert on psychological warfare, and that section sent him to Central America, apparently without informing him about rules governing CIA activities.

The manual was "really a command-and-control problem," the official said.